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# Parker College of Business students take first place at national academic competition

October 26, 2020



David Hudgins, top left, Marc Scott, Ph.D., Alecia Breen, Jerry Burke, Ph.D., and Ana Ortiz-Contreras pose for a Zoom screenshot. The students, advised by the Parker College of Business faculty, won the Intermodal Association of North America's National Academic Challenge.

For the second consecutive year, a team of Parker College of Business logistics students won the Intermodal Association of North America's (IANA) National Academic Challenge, an academic competition that supports instruction designed to educate logistics and intermodal transportation students.

Alecia Breen, Ana Ortiz-Contreras and David Hudgins outscored the other teams with their team presentation about determining fleet allocation and sizing decisions for a ground shipping company with services at 12 large marine ports in the U.S.

The team had to consider dimensions of uncertainty for import and export volumes at these ports related to shifting supply chain strategies, effects of the global pandemic on intermodal freight and tariffs stemming from the trade war between the U.S. and China.

It was the first time Ortiz-Contreras competed in the IANA Academic Challenge, which is hosted by the University of North Florida.

"In the beginning, it was a bit tough because we had to coordinate times when everyone on the team could meet," she said. "We also had to balance this with our classes. Whenever we weren't in class or doing homework, we were working on the case."

Ortiz-Contreras accepted the challenges head on and is grateful for her experience.

"Overall, it was a really great experience," she said. "I was pushed to think beyond what I learned in the classroom and apply critical thinking and problem-solving skills to be able to solve the challenge. Looking back, working on the case this past month has helped me grow as a student and professional because it gave me the opportunity to experience what real-life situations are like. It also let me put myself in the position of someone who has to make these kinds of decisions in their everyday life."

Allen Amason, Ph.D., dean of the Parker College of Business, is proud of the students' achievement.

"This is outstanding news — congratulations to the team," he said. "The world is a competitive place, and our supply chain management program continues to compete with and win against some of the best programs in the country."

Logistics students at the Parker College of Business have won four of the last five IANA-sponsored competitions. "These competitions give Georgia Southern's business students the opportunity to experience real-world challenges and develop their problem-solving skills," said Marc Scott, Ph.D., assistant professor of logistics and supply chain management and faculty advisor for the team.

"The opportunity to work on problems that are characterized and based on current real-world problems with access to large data sets to conduct analysis to address those problems delivers an experiential learning platform that is second to none," Scott said. "Further, IANA's commitment to ensuring students gain exposure to, and interaction with, industry leaders throughout their events builds a bridge to future opportunities for students — we've seen it happen. This is workforce development at its finest. IANA is having a significant impact on our students and program, and we are very thankful."

IANA is North America's only industry trade association that represents the combined interests of the intermodal freight industry. The association's mission is to promote the growth of efficient intermodal freight transportation through innovation, education and dialogue. The association offers valuable information and services specific to the intermodal industry encompassing consensus business solutions that facilitate operations, regulatory compliance and policy issue management. IANA's membership roster of more than 1,000 members represents the diverse companies critical to moving freight efficiently and safely. For more information, visit [www.intermodal.org](http://www.intermodal.org).

## Parker College of Business bolsters MBA program with new Professional Enrichment Plan

October 26, 2020

The MBA Program in the Parker College of Business at Georgia Southern University is offering experiential learning opportunities to its students through the new Parker Professional Enrichment Program (PEP) which connects students to engaging business and civic partners.

Through the PEP program, students are presented with opportunities to expand their professional network, cultivate lifelong commitments to professional and personal growth and development, and prepare to be high-functioning, effective leaders.

“I think for many students, particularly at the [graduate] level, there is an interest in guest speakers and professional development,” said Kevin Joyce, current MBA student. “In most programs, these types of events are extracurricular and require time that may otherwise be spent on homework or studying. By directly incorporating professional development events into the program, we have the opportunity to learn from business and community leaders without having to make a conscientious decision to sacrifice time elsewhere.”

Through the Parker PEP, students are connected to the real world in four primary areas: self-care, career planning, professional development and community service. The program began in September and has made a positive impression on currently enrolled students.

“I have been very impressed with the balance of the program — it has been well thought out,” said Kristin Karam, current MBA student. “I started this program because I wanted additional professional options and choices, but I have found myself looking forward to class and interacting with the professors of the program. I already have a master’s degree, and I have been very impressed with the contrast of how this program is set up. There’s a strong focus on development that is layered on top of the learning objectives and outcomes.”

Jeff Bush (ECON, '13), Parker College of Business alumnus and president of The Parker Companies, was the first in the PEP Executive Speaker Series. During his presentation, “Seize the Moment,” Bush focused on keys to success, stressing the importance of surrounding yourself with mentors, creating value for your organization, building a good reputation, trusting yourself, seeking and recognizing opportunities, and setting a high bar for success.

Students will participate in additional workshops on body language and stress management, led by Perfectly Polished, an etiquette school founded in 1986, and Georgia Southern President Kyle Marrero, respectively.

“My biggest take away from Jeff Bush’s presentation was that opportunities exist everywhere — even locally,” added Karam. “Every person you meet may lead to a great opportunity, and you need to be ready to take advantage of those opportunities.”

Students also have access to workshops on topics such as emotional intelligence. Caitlyn Cofer, assistant director of career development in the Office of Career and Professional Development at Georgia Southern, worked with students on emotional intelligence training and an EQ-i 2.0 emotional intelligence assessment.

“I have had the opportunity to take similar tests during my time in the military and was not surprised by most of the results about my strengths and weaknesses,” said Joyce. “However, what I learned through the EQ-i 2.0

assessment is how to better address those areas holding me back from an overall higher level of emotional intelligence.”

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